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Unclassified

Havana, Cuba.
April 19, 1961.

MEMORANDUM

Air Attack on Camp Libertad
(Columbia), Havana, April 15, 1961.

At 5.55, on the morning of April 15, 1961, I was awakened by sounds that appeared to be either thunder or explosions. The noise, or sounds, appeared to be quite close to the house, occupied by Mr. McGovern and myself, which is situated less than a mile from Camp Libertad. I got out of bed, went to and opened the window (at the rear of the bedroom) and saw a twin-engined light Bomber making a diving attack on the Camp. The air was full of exploding anti-aircraft shells, all aimed at the plane.

The pilot completed his bomb run amidst the flak and, after apparently dropping a bomb, righted his craft and started to climb upwards. A second or two after he reached his lowest point of the dive an explosion was heard, different in sound from the anti-aircraft guns. The plane then headed off to make a turn for another "pass" at the Camp. I then went to Mr. McGovern's room and aroused him.

sgd. J.M.D. Bernier

At approximately 6:00 a.m. we (McGovern and Bernier) went to the window in time to see the aircraft come in for its second dive on the Camp. The air was filled with exploding anti-aircraft shells and the plane dove right into the centre of the shell fire. After the dive the plane again started to ascend. Explosions were also heard after this second dive. The plane then veered to the right, gained altitude and prepared for another attack.

In his descent for the third pass, the pilot, within less than a mile from the base, fired rocket shells. They were definitely not bullets. It was relatively easy for us to follow the path of the rockets as it was then light enough to see the smoke trails. The plane continued on its course, heading directly toward the Camp. Again, after he pulled out of the dive, there was a series of explosions which indicated that on this attack three bombs were dropped. By this time, smoke was pouring skyward from the Camp. We could hear explosions by this time from the direction of Camp Libertad. The plane gained altitude, this time veering to the left in preparation for his last dive.

The anti-aircraft fire was much heavier by this time, the shells exploding all over and in large clusters. This time there was a pattern of cross-fire. The pilot directed his craft in under the apex of the cross-fire. On this last pass it seemed as if the plane had been hit. The air speed was considerably less than on the former passes. The plane did, however, make its final pass on the Camp and then went on, gained altitude and proceeded toward the sea.

Rifle and machine-gun fire was opened by police guarding the house across the street and firing continued for some time. Explosions could be heard for about an hour after the attacking plane had left the area. Smoke could be seen rising from the Camp for quite some time after that. We decided to go immediately to the Embassy and we reported for duty at 7 a.m.

J.M.D. Bernier.

Leo J. McGovern.